United Nations

Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General, addressing General Assembly on International Human Rights Day, says Universal Declaration of Human Rights has proved its universal character in last 45 years; stresses importance of implementing Plan of Action adopted in Vienna in June.

+ Secretary-General expresses alarm at murder of FMLN leader Mario López in El Salvador yesterday; notes that killing occurred one day after creation of joint mechanism to investigate politically motivated illegal armed groups in country.

+ UNICEF Executive Director deplores deliberate attacks on relief workers in former Yugoslavia; says they flagrantly violate international agreements requiring protection of children in armed conflicts.

+ United Nations appeals for $84 million in emergency humanitarian aid for Zaire to meet needs of internally displaced people and the destitute in Kinshasa until June 1994.

+ General Assembly, by recorded vote yesterday of 144 in favour to 1 against (Turkey), with 11 abstentions, calls on all States to ratify or accede to 1982 Law of the Sea Convention as soon as possible.

+ Second Committee approves draft resolution by which General Assembly would urge States and organizations to continue to aid rehabilitation of Somalia.

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In the course of 45 years, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had proved its true, universal character, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said this morning, addressing a ceremony in the General Assembly to mark International Human Rights Day and the 45th anniversary of the Declaration. "Today, in every part of the world, the Universal Declaration is held out as a common standard for all peoples," he said. The World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in June, had reaffirmed the solemn commitment of all States to fulfill their obligations to protect human rights in accordance with

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the United Nations Charter, he continued. But implementing the Plan of Action produced by the Conference would take sustained, concerted effort.

The Secretary-General honoured the winners of the 1993 Human Rights Awards for extraordinary achievement in the protection and promotion of human rights. The winners are: Dr. Erica-Irene Daes of Greece, Chairman/Rapporteur of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations; James P. Grant of the United States, national and Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); the Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists; the medical personnel of the Central Hospital of Sarajevo; Ganesh Man Singh, the Supreme Leader of the Nepali Congress; Dr. Sonia Picado Sotela of Costa Rica, Vice-President of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and Executive Director of the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights; The Sudanese Women's Union; Father Julio Tumiri Javier, founder and President of the Permanent Assembly of Human Rights of Bolivia, and Hassib Ben Ammar of Tunisia, President of the Arab Institute for Human Rights.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today expressed alarm at the murder in El Salvador yesterday of Mario López, a leader of the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN). In a statement issued by a United Nations spokesman, the Secretary-General noted that Mr. López had been murdered one day after the establishment of a joint mechanism for the investigation of politically motivated illegal armed groups in El Salvador, and that he had been a member of the FMLN's political committee.

The Secretary-General expressed the hope that the incident would be investigated thoroughly and rapidly, adding that the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) would assist in the investigation in accordance with its mandate.

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United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Executive Director James P. Grant today deplored deliberate attacks on relief workers in the former Yugoslavia, describing them as flagrant violations of international agreements requiring the protection of children in armed conflicts. "By deliberately targeting UNICEF relief workers clearly recognizable as carrying humanitarian supplies for children, those accountable show cowardice and callousness," he said. "Every time a relief worker is shot at to prevent the delivery of assistance, both the worker and the children are the victims."

A UNICEF truck transporting criticially needed food for children to health centres in Sarajevo was attacked yesterday when it broke down. A UNICEF car, on its way to rescue the driver, then came under heavy sniper fire as it neared the disabled truck. The occupants of both vehicles were later rescued by the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR). Meanwhile, a health centre in Sarajevo was hit by mortar fire yesterday. Its administrator, Dr. Galib Pleho, who worked closely with UNICEF, and four other persons were killed, while 11 were wounded. Those incidents come less than

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two weeks after a UNICEF relief worker, Selma Slipioevic, was shot in the back by a sniper as she went to aid a wounded woman in east Mostar.

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The United Nations today launched an appeal for $84.2 million in emergency humanitarian assistance for Zaire to cover, until June 1994, the most urgent needs of the country's internally displaced people and the destitute in its capital, Kinshasa. Among the requirements covered by the appeal are: safe blood transfusions to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS; emergency food assistance; nutritional rehabilitation and emergency health care for children, and "food-for-work" programmes.

Over the past three years, the general economic and social situation in Zaire has deteriorated sharply. Violent inter-ethnic conflicts have erupted in different parts of the country resulting in large numbers of internally displaced people. The appeal focuses on the plight of the displaced Kasai population who were living in the Shaba province, and those displaced in North Kivu. The exodus from rural areas to Kinshasa has swelled its population to 4.5 million, many of whom are jobless and the appeal also addresses some of their needs.

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The General Assembly yesterday called on all States to consider ratifying or acceding to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea as soon as possible. Adopting a resolution on the subject by a recorded vote of 144 in favour to 1 against (Turkey), with 11 abstentions, the Assembly called on States to observe the provisions of the Convention when enacting national legislation and to strengthen cooperation in the conservation and management of living marine resources. The Assembly took that action as it concluded its consideration of the Law of the Sea.

Also yesterday, the Assembly decided to establish an Ad Hoc Committee to elaborate an international convention dealing with the safety and security of UN and associated personnel, with particular reference to responsibility for attacks on them. It took that action by adopting, without a vote, a resolution on the question of responsibility for attacks on United Nations and associated personnel. It was one of nine resolutions and five decisions adopted without a vote by the Assembly, which had been recommended by the Sixth Committee (Legal).

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The Second Committee (Economic and Financial) yesterday approved a draft resolution by which the General Assembly would urge all States and organizations to continue to help the Somali people in the rehabilitation of basic social and economic services. They would also be urged to aid institution-building aimed at the restoration of civil administration at the local level in all parts of the country where peace, security and stability prevailed.

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Under another draft resolution approved yesterday, the Assembly would call on the international community to continue to meet the emergency needs of Sudan, including recovery, rehabilitation and capacity-building needs.

The Second Committee also approved three drafts relating to the environment and development. One would have the Assembly urge the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification to complete its work by June 1994. The second draft would ask the Secretary-General to ensure that the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development was widely disseminated by the UN system, and that its principles were incorporated in the Organization's programmes and processes. The third would have the Assembly discontinue reports on the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond and on the World Commission on Environment and Development.

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